

Q: Can a youth/parent/legal guardian opt-out of the CANS assessment?

A: No, not if the CANS is required as a standard part of care in the youth's mental health Medicaid service.

| Mental health providers in specific services must fully assess youth using a functional assessment tool called the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS). For youth who are in ongoing treatment, the CANS must be updated at least every 90 days.

Montana Medicaid is requiring mental health providers to use the CANS to ensure that the services offered to families meet their needs and that all assessment records are kept the same way. If all providers keep their records the same way using the CANS, it will be easier for families' providers to talk to each other. This may limit the number of times a family has to retell their history.

Montana Medicaid providers will use the CANS to help them partner with a youth and their family to develop a treatment plan. Over time, Children's Mental Health Bureau hopes to use the data to evaluate or improve services offered to youth and decide whether to develop new services.

In some states, lawsuits brought against the Medicaid agency by youth and families have resulted in requiring the CANS for youth and families. Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services is being proactive in requiring the CANS now. We hope that the CANS will empower YOU (the youth and/or his/her parent or guardian) to help to make decisions about treatment planning. The CANS is non-clinical and highlights the needs of a youth using a simple scale that all members of a treatment team can understand. It doesn't replace the recommendations of your therapist but it does point to where needs and strengths are.

The Montana CANS System is Privacy (HIPAA) and HITECH compliant. Anyone who utilizes the CANS System has agreed to comply with HIPAA and HITECH requirements.

For questions, contact Robin Albee (406-444-2727) or Kandis Franklin (406-444-6018)